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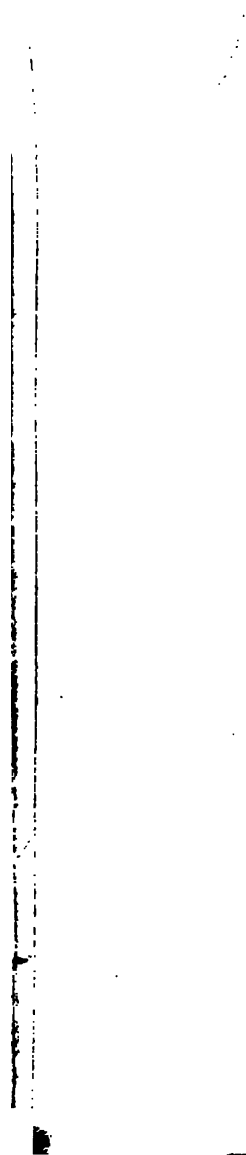


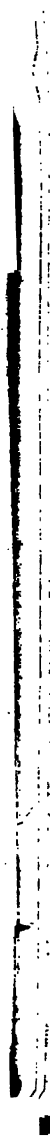
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A
SHORT AND EASY METHOD
WITH 1287
DEISTS,
WHEREIN THE
CERTAINTY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
IS DEMONSTRATED BY INFALLIBLE PROOF
FROM
FOUR RULES,
IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.
A NEW AMERICAN EDITION.

CAMBRIDGE,

PRINTED BY WILLIAM HILLIARD.

1805.



PREFACE

TO

MR. LESLIE'S

SHORT METHOD WITH THE DEISTS.

MANY attempts have lately been made upon the people of England, to seduce them from the Christian faith, and to lead them to destruction, temporal and eternal ; something should be done to secure them against profligate writers, the declared apostles of atheism. I therefore rejoice to find that the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge has resolved to print and disperse *Mr. Leslie's Short Method with the Deists*. The world affords nothing so effectual on the Christian evidences ; and I pray God to give his blessing to their pious endeavours, by opening the hearts of those, who are in error, to receive the light of truth ; and it is here so represented to them, that they will receive it ; unless a spirit of infatuation be gone forth among them ; which may God Almighty avert !

In this Tract the argument is so short and clear, that the meanest capacity may understand it ; and so forcible, that no man has yet been found able to resist it. When it was first published, some attempts were made ; but they soon came to nothing. The argument in brief is this ; the Christian religion

consists of facts and doctrines, each depending on the other ; so that, if the facts are true, the doctrines must be true. Thus for example, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact ; our resurrection is a doctrine. Admit the fact ; and the doctrine cannot be denied. The ascension of Jesus Christ is another fact ; his return to judge the world is a doctrine ; if the fact be true, the doctrine must be so likewise. For, argues the apostle, if the doctrine be not true, the fact must be false ; *if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.*

The truth of a matter of fact may be certainly known, if it be attended with certain marks, such as no false fact can possibly have. These marks are four. It is required, first, that the fact be a sensible fact, such as men's outward senses can judge of ; secondly, that it be notorious, performed publicly in the presence of witnesses ; thirdly, that there be memorials of it, or monuments and actions kept up in memory of it ; fourthly, that such monuments and actions begin with the fact. It is the design of Mr. Leslie's book to show, how these four marks do all meet in the facts of Christianity.

Every reader, to whom the Short Method is new, will be induced to think more highly of it, if I tell him its history, as I received it from Doctor Delany, Dean of Down in Ireland ; who told me he had it from Captain Leslie a son of the author. It was the fortune of Mr. Leslie to be acquainted with the Duke of

Leeds of that time ; who observed to him that, although he was a believer of the Christian religion, he was not satisfied with the common methods of proving it ; that the argument was long and complicated ; so that some had neither leisure, nor patience to follow it, and others were not able to comprehend it ; that, as it was the nature of all truth to be plain and simple, if Christianity were a truth, there must be some short way of showing it to be so ; and he wished Mr. Leslie would think of it. Such a hint to such a man, in the space of three days, furnished a rough draught of the Short and Easy Method with the Deists ; which he presented to the Duke ; who looked it over, and then said, “ I thought I was a Christian before, but I am sure of it now ; and, as I am indebted to you for converting me, I shall henceforth look upon you, as my spiritual father.” And he acted accordingly ; for he never came into his company afterward without asking his blessing. Such is the story ; very nearly, as Dr. Delany himself would tell it, if he were now alive. The circumstances are so memorable, that there must have been something very extraordinary at the bottom to account for them ; and so thought Dr. Middleton, though the work affected him in a very different manner. Feeling how necessary it was to his principles, that he should some way rid himself of Leslie’s argument ; he looked out for some false fact, to which the four marks

might be applied; and this he did for twenty years together, without being able to find one. This I learned from the late Dr. Berkley, son of the celebrated Bishop of Cloyne; who conversed much with the world, and I believe would not have reported such a thing, but upon good authority. I may mention another event, which ought not to be forgotten upon this occasion. An anecdote it is not; because it must be already known to the public. Dr. Priestley, that unaccountable man, like the Quaker, who went over to Constantinople to convert the grand Seignior, wrote and printed a letter to the Infidels of France, with a view of bringing them back to Christianity; in which letter he gives them Mr. Leslie's argument, as if it had been his own; for he says not a word of the Author. The world looks upon the Doctor, as one of the false Apostles of the age; but, if he had been a true Apostle, and could work miracles, what reason have we to think that they would have more effect upon the French, than miracles had upon the Jews?

To those, who take Mr. Leslie's tract into their hands, I have only this short advice to give. I beseech them to remember that, if Christianity be true, it is *tremendously true*. All the great things, this world can show, are *nothing* in comparison with it. *Heaven and hell are the issue. Its facts yet to come are as certain, as those that are past. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; the heavens shall be on fire, and the elements shall melt with fer-*

vent heat ; the Angels shall gather the elect of God from the four winds ; all men shall be called upon to give an account of their words and actions ; and they, who now deny Jesus Christ, and hold him in defiance, shall see the Heaven and earth flee before his face. A man must be stupified, if he can think on these things without fleeing from the wrath to come ; and there is no way, but in the belief of Christianity, which this book teaches.

I feel myself so deeply interested in this design of the Society, that I wish them all the aid and encouragement, which Heaven and earth can give them ; and am their faithful friend and devoted humble servant,

WILLIAM JONES.

NAYLAND, Feb. 23, 1799.

A
SHORT AND EASY METHOD

WITH

DEISTS.

SIR,

I. **I**N answer to yours of the third instant, I much condole with you on the unhappy circumstance of your being placed in company; where, as you say, you continually hear the sacred scriptures, and the histories therein contained, particularly of *Moses* and *Christ*, and all *revealed* religion, turned into ridicule by men, who set up for *sense* and *reason*. They say that there is no better ground for believing in *Christ*, than in *Mahomet*; that all these pretences to *revelation* are cheats, and ever have been among *Pagans*, *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Christians*; that they are alike impositions of cunning and designing men upon the *credulity*, at first, of simple and unthinking *persons*, till, their numbers increasing, their delusions grew *popular*, and came at last to be established by *laws*; and then the force of *education* and *custom* gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till such *deceits* come really to be believed, being received upon trust from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and ground of *them*; which

these our modern men of sense, as they desire to be esteemed, say that they only do; that they only have their judgments freed from the slavish authority of precedents and laws in matters of *truth*, which, they say, ought only to be decided by *reason*; though by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preserve themselves from outrage and legal penalties; for none of their complexion are addicted to sufferings or martyrdom.

Now, sir, that, which you desire from me, is some short topic of *reason*, if such can be found, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long disputes, and which these men of reason deny by wholesale, though they can give no reason for it, but only suppose that authors have been trumped upon us, *interpolated*, and *corrupted*, so that no stress can be laid upon them, though it cannot be shown, wherein they are so corrupted; which, in reason, it ought to lie upon them to prove, who alledged it; otherwise it is not only a precarious, but a guilty plea; and the more so, as they refrain not to quote books on their side, for whose authority there are no better, or not so good grounds. However, you say, it makes your disputes endless, and they go away with noise and clamor, and boast, that there is nothing, at least nothing *certain*, to be said on the Christian side. Therefore you are desirous of finding some *one topic of reason*, which will demonstrate the truth of the *Christian religion*, and at the

same time distinguish it from the impostures of *Mahomet*, and of the old *Pagan* world; that our Deists may be brought to this test, and be obliged either to renounce their *reason* and the *common reason* of mankind, or to submit to the clear proof, from *reason*, of the Christian religion; which must be such *proof*, as no imposture can pretend, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian religion not be an imposture. Whether such a proof, one single proof, to avoid confusion, may not be found, you desire to know from me.

You say that you cannot imagine but there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear and one; and therefore that *one* reason for it, if it be the true reason, must be sufficient; and, if sufficient, it is better than *many*; for multiplicity confounds, especially weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed a hard task upon me; I wish I could perform it. For, though every truth is *one*; yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot always come to it directly, but by many inferences.

But I think that in the case before us there is such a proof, as you require, and I will set it down as concisely and plainly, as I can.

II. Firstly then, I suppose that the *truth* of the doctrine of CHRIST will be sufficiently evinced, if the *matters of fact*, which are recorded of him in the gospels, be true; for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to MOSES. If he brought the children of Israel through the red sea in that miraculous manner, which is related in Exodus, and did such other wonderful things, as are there told of him; it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from God; these being the strongest proofs, we can desire, and which every Deist will confess he would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. Therefore the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of these *matters of fact*.

The method, I shall take, is firstly to lay down such *rules*, as to the truth of *matters of fact* in general, that, where they all meet, *such matters of fact* cannot be false. Then secondly, to show that all these rules do meet the *matters of fact* of MOSES, and of CHRIST; and that they do not meet in the *matters of fact* of Mahomet, and of the *Heathen deities*, nor can possibly meet in any *imposture* whatsoever.

2. The rules are these, 1st. That the *matter of fact* be such, that men's outward senses, their *eyes* and *ears* may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public *monuments* be kept up in memory of it, but some outward *actions* be performed. 4. That such *monuments*, and such *actions* or *observances* be instituted, and do commence from the *time*, that the *matter of fact* was done.

3. The *two first rules* make it impossible for any such *matter of fact* to be imposed upon

men at the time, when such *fact* was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example ; suppose any man should pretend that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides ; I say, it is morally impossible, that he could persuade the people of London, that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say that this was a notorious falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, nor had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted (and I suppose, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world) that no such imposition could be put upon men, at the *time*, when such *public fact* was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains, that such *matter of fact* might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation, wherein the thing was said to be done, were all past and gone ; and the credulity of after ages might be so imposed upon, as to believe that things were done in former ages, which ~~were~~ not.

For this the two last rules secure us as much, as the two first rules in the former case ; for, whenever such a *matter of fact* came to be invented, if not only *monuments* were said to remain of it, but likewise that *public actions* and *observances* were constantly used ever since the *fact* was said to be done, the deceit must be

detected, by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions or observances were ever used by them. For example; suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing, said to be done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get some to believe it; but, if I say that not only such a thing was done, but that, from that day to this, every man, at the age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of that finger; and that this institution was said to be part of the *matter of fact*, done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof of it, and as having descended without interruption, and been constantly practised, in memory of such *fact*, from the time that such *fact* was done; I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case, because every one could contradict me, as to the *mark* of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that, being part of my original *matter of fact*, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

III. Let us now come to the second point, to show that the *matters of fact* of MOSES, and of CHRIST, have all these *rules or marks* before mentioned; and that neither the *matters of fact* of MAHOMET, or what is reported of the *heathen deities*, have the like; and that no *impostor* can have them all.

I. As to MOSES, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded 600, 000 men, that he had brought them out of E-

gypt through the *Red Sea* ; fed them forty years without bread, by miraculous means, and the other *matters of fact* recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Because every man's senses, who was then alive, must have contradicted it. Therefore he must have imposed upon all their *senses*, if he could have made them believe it, when it was *false*. So that here are the first and second of the above mentioned four marks.

For the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books, as *truth*, and not to have rejected them, as a manifest *imposture* ; which told of all these things, as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deut. xi. 2, to verse 8. “ And know
 “ ye this day, for I speak not with your children, which have not known, and which
 “ have not seen the chastisement of the Lord
 “ your God, his greatness, his mighty hand,
 “ and his stretched out arm, and his miracles,
 “ and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharoah, the king of Egypt, and
 “ unto all his land ; and what he did unto the
 “ army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to
 “ their chariots ; how he made the waves of
 “ the Red Sea to overflow them, as they pursued after you ; and how the Lord hath
 “ destroyed them unto this day ; and what he
 “ did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came
 “ into this place ; and what he did unto Dathan and
 “ Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reu-

“ben, how the earth opened her mouth, and
 “swallowed them up, and their households,
 “and their tents, and all the substance, that
 “was in their possession, in the midst of all
 “Israel. But your eyes have seen all the
 “great acts of the Lord, which he did,” &c.

Hence we must suppose it impossible, that
 these books of *Moses* (if an imposture) could
 have been invented, and put upon the people,
 who were then alive, when all these things
 were said to be done.

The utmost therefore, to which even *supposition* can be stretched, is, that these books
 were written in some age *after Moses*, and
 published in his name.

To this I say that, if it *were* so, it was im-
 possible, that *these books* should be received, as
 the books of *MOSES*, in that age, wherein they
 may have been supposed to have been first in-
 vented. Why? Because they speak of them-
 selves, as delivered by *MOSES*, and kept in the
ark from his time. “And it came to pass,
 “when *MOSES* had made an end of writing the
 “words of this law in a book, until they were
 “finished, that *MOSES* commanded the Levites,
 “who bare the ark of the covenant of the
 “Lord, saying, take this book of the law, and
 “put it in the side of the ark of the covenant
 “of the Lord your God, that it may be there
 “for a witness against thee.” Deut. xxxi. 24,
 25, 26. And a *copy* of this book was likewise
 to be left with the king. “And it shall be,
 “when he sitteth upon the throne of his king-

“dom, that he shall write him a copy of this
 “law in a book, out of that, which is before
 “the priest the Levites; and it shall be with
 “him, and he shall read therein all the days
 “of his life; that he may learn to fear the
 “Lord his God, to keep all the words of this
 “law, and these statutes to do them.” Deut.
 xviii. 18, 19.

Here then you see that this book of the law speaks of itself, not only as a history or relation of what things were then done; but as the *standing* and *municipal law* and *statutes* of the nation of the *Jews*, binding the king as well, as the people.

Now, in whatever age *after Moses* you suppose that this book was forged, it was impossible it could be received, as truth; because it was not then to be found, either in the ark, or with the king, or any where else. For, when first invented, every body must know that he had never heard of it before.

Therefore they could less believe it to be the book of their *statutes*, and the *standing law* of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, at this day, invent a book of *statutes* for England, and make it pass upon the nation, as the *only book of statutes*, that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the *books* of *MOSES* (if they were invented in any age after *MOSES*) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, viz. the *statutes* and *municipal law* of the nation of the

Jews ; and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books all along from the days of *Moses* to that day, in which they were first invented ; that is, that they had owned them, before they had ever heard of them. Nay more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their *former laws*, and *government*, if they could receive these books, as being their former laws ; and they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists one short question ; was there ever a book of *sham laws*, which were not the laws of the nation, *palmed* upon any people, since the world began ? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of laws of the *Jews* ? Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people ?

But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of *MOSES* have a farther demonstration of their truth, than even other law-books have. For they not only contain the *laws*, but give an historical account of their *institution*, and the *practice* of them from that time ; as of the *passover* in memory of the death of the first born in Egypt ; and that the same day all the first born of Israel both of man and beast were by a perpetual law dedicated to God ; and the Levites taken for all the first born of the children of Israel. That Aaron's *rod*, which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonder-

ful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewise the pot of *manna*, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness. That the brazen *serpent* was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpents. Num. xxi. 9. The feast of *Pentecost*, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon mount Horeb, &c.

Beside these remembrances of *particular* actions and occurrences there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt in general, which included all the particulars. As of the *Sabbath* ; their *daily sacrifices*, and *yearly expiation* ; their *new moons*, and several *feasts* and *fasts*. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

Not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us that a particular *tribe* was appointed and consecrated by God, as his *priests* ; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions celebrated ; that it was *death* for any other to approach the altar ; that their high priest wore a glorious *mitre*, and magnificent *robes* of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous *Urim* and *Thummim* in his breast plate, whence the divine responses were given ; that at his word the king and all the

people were to go out, and to come in ; that these Levites were likewise the chief *judges*, even in all *civil* causes, and that it was *death* to resist their sentence. Now, whenever it can be supposed, that these books of MOSES were forged in some ages after MOSES, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe that they had received these books from their *fathers*, had been instructed in them, when they were *children*, and had taught them to their children ; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their *children*, in pursuance of what was commanded in these books ; that they had observed the yearly *passover*, the weekly *sabbath*, the *new moons*, and all these several *feasts*, *fasts*, and *ceremonies*, commanded in these books ; that they had never eaten any *swines'* flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books ; that they had a magnificent *tabernacle*, with a visible *priesthood* to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi ; over whom was placed a glorious *high priest*, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives ; whose death only could deliver those, that were fled to the cities of refuge ; and that these *priests* were their ordinary *judges*, even in civil matters ; I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it ? Or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that prac-

tice ? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above mentioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of *supposition*, viz, that these things were practised, before these books of MOSES were *forged* ; and that these books did impose upon the nation only in making them believe that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things, as were inserted in those books.

Let us then proceed upon this supposition, (however groundless) and will not the *same impossibilities* occur, as in the former case ? For, first, this must suppose that the *Jews* kept all these observances in memory of *nothing*, or without knowing any thing of their *original*, or of the *reason*, why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the *ground* and *reason* of their being kept ; as the *Passover*, in memory of God's *passing over* the *children* of the *Israelites* in that night, wherein he slew all the first born of Egypt, and so of the rest.

But, secondly, let us *suppose*, contrary both to *reason* and *fact*, that the *Jews* did not know any *reason*, why they kept these observances ; yet was it possible to put it upon them, that they *had kept* these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of MOSES were first *forged* ? For example ; suppose I should now forge some romantic story of strange things, done a thousand years ago, and in confirmation of this should endeavour to persuade the Christian world, that they

had all along, from *that day* to this, kept first day of the week in memory of such a hero, as *Apollonius, Barcosbas, or Mabomet*; had all been baptized in his name; and seen by his name, and upon *that very book* (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before) in their public judicatures; that book was their *gospel* and *law*, which they have ever since that time, these thousand years universally received and owned, and none ever. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible, that such a *cheat* could pass, such a *legend* be received, as the *gospel* of *Christians*; and that they could be made to believe that they never had any other *gospel*? The same reason is applicable to the books of *Isaiah*, and to every *matter of fact*, which has the *four marks* before mentioned; and the marks secure any such *matter of fact* as from being *invented* and *imposed* in any ages; as at the time when such *facts* were to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example in this case. The *Stonehenge* in *Salisbury plain* is known by every body; and yet no one knows the reason, why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of whom.

Now suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and affirm that these *stones* were set by *Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua*, in memory of such and such of their actions; for farther confirmation of this should say in this book that it was written at the time, w

such actions were done, and by the *actors* themselves, or by *eye witnesses* ; and that this book had been received as *truth*, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since. Moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our *children*, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves, when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England ? And whether, if I should insist upon it, I should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam ?

Now let us compare this with the *Stonchenge*, as I may call it, or *twelve great stones* set up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joshua. There it is said, that the reason, why they were set up, was, that when their *children*, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them ; and the thing, in memory of which they were set up, was such, as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that *time*, when it was said to be done ; it was as wonderful and miraculous, as their passage through the Red Sea ; and withal free from a very poor objection, which Deists have advanced against that miracle of the Red Sea ; thinking to solve it by a *springtide* with the concurrence of a strong wind, happening at the same time, which left the sand so dry, that the Israelites, being all foot, might pass through the oozy places and holes, which it must be supposed the sea left behind it ; but that the Egyp-

tians, being all horse and chariots, stuck in those holes, and were so entangled, that they could not march so fast, as the Israelites; and that this was all the meaning of its being said, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at least nothing *miraculous*, in all this action.

This is advanced in *Le Clerc's* Dissertations upon Genesis, lately printed in Holland; and that part, with others of like tendency, endeavouring to resolve other *miracles*, as that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, &c. into mere *natural* causes, are translated into English by the well known *T. Brown*, for the edification of the Deists in England.

But these gentlemen have forgotten that the Israelites had great herds of many thousand *cattle* with them; which would be apter to stray and fall into those holes and oozy places in the strand, than horses with riders, who might direct them.

But such precarious and silly suppositions are not worth answering. If there had been no more in this *passage* through the Red Sea, than that of a *springtide*, &c. it had been impossible for Moses to have made the Israelites believe that relation, given of it in Exodus with so many particulars, which themselves saw to be true.

All those *scriptures* also, which magnify this action, and appeal to it, as a full demonstration of the miraculous power of God, must be reputed, as *romance* or *legend*.

I say this for the sake of some Christians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more easy to be believed, if they can solve, whatever seems *miraculous* in it, by the power of *second* causes; and so make all, as they speak, natural and easy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and easy result would be, not to believe one word in all those sacred oracles. For, if things be not, as they are told in any relation, that relation must be false; and, if false in part, we cannot trust to it, either in whole or in part.

Here are to be excepted mistranslations and errors, either in copy or in press. But, where there is no room for supposing these, as where all copies agree; there we must either receive all, or reject all. I mean any book, that pretends to be written from the mouth of God. For in common histories we may believe part, and reject part, as we see cause.

But to return. The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, in memory of which those *stones* at Gilgal were set up, is free from all those little carpings before mentioned, that are made as to the passage through the Red Sea. For notice was given to the Israelites the day before of this great *miracle* to be done. It was done at noon day before the whole nation; and, when the waters of *Jordan* were divided, it was not at any *low ebb*, but at the time, when that river *overflowed all his banks*; and it was done, not by *winds*, or in length of time, which

winds must take to do it ; but all on a sudden, as soon as the “ feet of the priests, that
“ bare the ark, were dipped in the brim of the
“ water, then the waters, which came down
“ from above, stood and arose up upon an heap,
“ very far from the city Adam, that is beside
“ Zaretan ; and those, that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea,
“ failed, and were cut off ; and the people
“ passed over right against *Jericho*. The priests
“ stood in the midst of Jordan, till all the armies of Israel had passed over. And it
“ came to pass, when the priests, that bare the
“ ark of the covenant of the Lord, were come
“ up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles
“ of the priests’ feet were lift upon the dry
“ land, that the waters of Jordan returned
“ unto their place, and flowed over all his
“ banks, as they did before. And the people
“ came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of
“ the first month, and encamped in Gilgal on
“ the east border of *Jericho* ; and those *twelve*
“ *stones*, which they took out of Jordan, did
“ *Joshua* pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the
“ *children* of Israel, saying, when your children
“ shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, what mean *these stones* ? Then shall ye let
“ your children know, saying, Israel came over
“ this Jordan on dry land. For the LORD your
“ GOD dried up the waters of Jordan from
“ before you, until ye were passed over ; as the
“ LORD your GOD did to the Red Sea, which
“ he dried up from before us, until we

“ were gone over. That all the people of the
 “ earth might know the hand of the LORD, that
 “ it is mighty ; that ye might fear the LORD
 “ your God for ever.”

If the passage over the Red Sea had been only taking the advantage of a *springtide* ; how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the LORD was mighty ? How would a thing, no more remarkable, have been taken notice of through all the world ? How would it have taught Israel to fear the LORD, when they must know that, notwithstanding all these great words, there was so little in it ? How could they have believed, or received a book, as *truth*, which they knew told the matter so far otherwise from what it was ?

But this passage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red Sea, is free from all those cavils, that are made as to that of the Red Sea ; and is a farther attestation to it, being said to be done in the same manner, as was that of the Red Sea.

Now to form our argument, let us suppose that there never was any such thing, as that passage over Jordan ; that these stones at Gilgal were set *up on* some other occasion, ~~in some~~ after age ; and that some designing man invented this book of Joshua, and said that it was written by Joshua at that time, and gave this *stonage* at Gilgal for a testimony of the truth of it. Would not every body say to him, “ we know the *stonage* at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reason for it ; nor of this book of Joshua ? Where has it

“ been all this while ? *Where* and *how* came you, after so many ages, to find it ? Beside, this book tells us that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our *children* from age to age ; and therefore that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that *stonage* at Gilgal, as a *memorial* of it. But we were never taught it, when we were *children* ; nor did ever teach *our children* any such thing. It is not likely that could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a *stonage* did continue, which was set up for that, and no other end.”

If for the reasons, before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in *Salisbury* plain ; how much less could it be to the stonage at *Gilgal* ?

And, if where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a *sham reason* cannot be imposed ; how much more impossible is it to impose upon us in *actions* and *observances*, which we *celebrate* in memory of particular passages ? How impossible to make us forget those passages, which we daily *commemorate* ; and to persuade us, that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before ; that is, that we knew it, before we knew it !

And, if we find it thus impossible for an imposition to be put upon us, even in some things, which have not all the *four marks*, before mentioned ; how much more impossible is it, that any deceit should be in that thing, where *all the four marks* do meet !

This has been showed, in the first place, as to the *matters of fact* of MOSES.

2. Therefore I come now (secondly) to show that, as in the *matters of fact* of MOSES, so likewise all these *four marks* do meet in the *matters of fact*, which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed SAVIOUR; and my work herein will be the shorter, because all, that is said before of MOSES and his *books*, is every way as applicable to CHRIST and his *Gospel*. His *works* and *miracles* are there said to be done *publicly* in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, “ I spake openly to the world “ and in secret have I said nothing.” It is told, that three thousand at one time, and that above five thousand at another time were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the *two* first of the *rules* before mentioned.

Then for the two second; *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* were instituted, as perpetual *memorials* of these things; and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the *very time*, when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption in all ages through the whole Christian world from that time to this. And CHRIST himself did ordain *apostles* and other *ministers* of his Gospel, to preach, and to *administer* these *sacraments*; and to *govern* his *church*; and that always, even unto the end of the world. Ac.

cordingly they have continued by regular succession to this day ; and, no doubt, ever will, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian *clergy* are as notorious a *matter of fact*, as the *tribe of Levi* among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a *law* to Christians, as the book of MOSES to the Jews ; and it being part of the *matters of fact*, related in the Gospel, that such an *order* of men were appointed by CHRIST, and to continue to the end of the world ; consequently, if the Gospel were a *fiction*, and invented some ages after CHRIST ; then at that time, when it was first invented, there could be no such *order of clergy*, as derived themselves from the institution of CHRIST ; which must give the lye to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be *false*. And the *matters of fact* of CHRIST being pressed to be true no otherwise, than as there was at that time (when ever the *Deists* will suppose the *Gospel* to be *forged*) not only public *sacraments* of CHRIST'S institution, but an order of *clergy* likewise of his appointment to *administer* them ; and it being impossible, there could be any such things before they were *invented* ; it is as impossible, that they should be *received*, when invented. Therefore, by what is said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing it in after ages, as at the time, when those things were said to be done.

3. The *matters of fact* of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the *deities*, do all want some of the aforesaid *four rules*, whereby the certainty of

matters of fact is demonstrated. First, for *Mahomet* pretended to no *miracles*, as he tells us in his *Alcoran*; and those, which are commonly told of him, pass among Mahometans themselves, as legendary fables; and, as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them; as the *legends* of saints are in the church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*, page 34.

But, in the next place, those, which are told of him, do all want the *two* first *rules* before mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon; his mersa, or night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to Heaven, &c. were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them; and they are as groundless, as the delusions of *Fox* or *Muggleton* among ourselves.

The same is to be said (in the second place) of the fables of the Heathen gods, of *Mercury's* stealing sheep, *Jupiter's* turning himself into a bull, and the like; beside the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. Moreover the wise among the heathen did reckon no otherwise of these, than as *fables*, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them, of which several of them have given us the rationale or explication; and it is plain enough, that *Ovid* meant no other by all his metamorphoses.

It is true, the heathen deities had their priests; they had likewise their *feasts*, *games*, and other public *institutions* in memory of them.

But all these want the *fourth* mark, viz. that such priesthood and institutions commenced from the time, when such things, as they commemorate, were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from imposture, by detecting it at the time, when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the *Bacchanalia*, and other heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after, what was reported of these gods, was said to be done; and therefore can be no proof of them. And the priests of Bacchus, Appollo, &c. were not ordained by these supposed gods; but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honor to them. Therefore these *orders* of *priests* are no evidence of the facts, which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now, to apply what has been said; you may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any action, that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No, it is impossible; and (to resume a little, what was said before) the histories of Exodus and the Gospel never could have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi and of CHRIST; of the *Sabbath*, of the *Passover*, of *Circumcision*, of *Baptism*, and of the *Lord's Supper*, &c. are there related, as descending all the way down from those times without interruption. Moreover it is as impossible to persuade men, that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, sabbaths, sacraments,

&c. under the administration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c ; and without believing these it was impossible, that either the law, or the gospel, could have been received.

The truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the Gospel being no otherwise pressed upon men, than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them ; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat, when first invented ; as impossible, as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind at the time, when such *public facts* were said to be done.

V. I do not say that every thing, which wants these four marks, is false ; but that nothing can be false, which has them all. I have no doubt, that there was such a man, as Julius Cæsar, that he fought at Pharsalia, was killed in the senate house, with many other facts of ancient times, though we keep no public observances in memory of them.

But this shows that the matters of fact of MOSES and of CHRIST have come down to us better guarded, than any other facts, how true soever.

Yet our Deists, who would laugh any man out of the world, as an irrational brute, who should offer to deny Cæsar or Alexander,

Homer or Virgil, their public works and actions, do at the same time value themselves, as the only men of sense, of free, generous, and unbiassed judgments, for ridiculing the histories of MOSES and CHRIST, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded by infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. Beside that, the importance of the subject would oblige all men to inquire more narrowly into the one, than into the other ; for what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar, whether he beat, or was beaten at Pharsalia, whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books, and whether, what is related in the Iliad or Æneid, be true or false ? It is not two pence up or down to any man in the world ; and therefore it is worth no man's while to inquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity, are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy scriptures ; and therefore men should be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other facts ; to examine and sift them narrowly, and to find out the deceit, if any such can be found ; for it concerns them nearly, and is of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable then is it to reject these facts, so sifted, so examined, and so attested, as no other facts in the world ever were ; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable,

even to madness, to deny other facts, which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence to us, whether true or false !

VII. There are several other topics, whence the truth of the Christian Religion is evinced to all, who judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider. As the improbability, that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen formed a design of converting the whole world to believe their delusions ; and the impossibility of their effecting it, without arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing, that could recommend them ; and of imposing a doctrine, quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and to all worldly advantages and enjoyments ; and this in an age of so great learning and sagacity, as that, wherein the gospel was first preached ; that these apostles not only underwent all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions and most cruel deaths, that could be inflicted, in attestation of what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery of their own contriving. Some have suffered for errors, which they thought to be truth, but never any for what themselves knew to be lies. The apostles must know what they taught to be lies, if it were so ; because they spoke of those things, which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c.

Nor can it be, that they perhaps might propose some temporal advantages to themselves,

but missed them, and met sufferings instead of them ; for, if it had been so, it is more than probable, that, when they saw their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy. Especially, when they might not only have saved their lives, but gotten great rewards for doing it, that not one of them was ever brought to do this.

But this is not all ; for they tell us that their Master bid them expect nothing, but sufferings in this world. This is the tenure of that Gospel, which they taught ; and they told the same to all, whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment. For all, who were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden to prepare for them. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily, and to follow him ; and told them that in the world they should have tribulation ; that, whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife, children, and their very lives, could not be his disciples ; that he, who sought to save his life in this world, should lose in the next.

Now that this despised doctrine of the cross prevailed so universally against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world ; against the rage and persecution of all the kings and powers of the earth ; must show its original to be divine, and its protector almighty. What else could conquer without arms, persuade without rhetoric, overcome en-

emies, disarm tyrants, and subdue empires ?

VIII. We may add to all this the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matters of fact of CHRIST, such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of CHRIST, and the other about seventy years after ; so that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice, sufficient to incline them to deny the fact itself of CHRIST. But their confessing it (as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate, the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of christianity, that have arisen in the world) is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the *fact*.

IX. But there is another argument, more strong and convincing, than even this matter of fact ; more than what I see with my eyes ; which the apostle Peter called a more sure word, that is proof, than what he saw and heard upon the Holy Mount, when our blessed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the apostles ; for, having repeated the passage, as a proof of that, whereof they were eye-witnesses, and heard the voice from heaven giving attestation to our Lord Christ, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. he says, verse 19, " We have a more sure word of prophecy," for the proof of this Jesus being the Messiah, that is, the prophecies, which had gone before

of him from the beginning of the world, and all exactly fulfilled in him.

Men may dispute an imposition or delusion upon our outward senses. But how can that be false, which has been so long, even from the beginning of the world, and so often by all the prophets in several ages foretold ; how can this be an imposition or a forgery ?

Even Deists must confess that the book, we call the Old Testament, was in the hands of the Jews long before our Saviour came into the world ; and, if they will compare the prophecies of the Messiah with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumstances in the person, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our blessed Savior, they will find this proof, what our apostle here calls it, "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and "the day star arise in your hearts." Which God grant ! Here is no possibility of deceit or imposture.

Old prophecies (and all so agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat ; and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all these.

For this therefore I refer Deists to my Method with the Jews.

I desire them likewise to look there, sect. xi, and consider the prophecies, given so long ago, (of which they see the fulfilling at this day with their own eyes,) of the state of the Jews for many ages past and at present, without a king or priest, or temple, or sacrifice,

scattered to the four winds, sifted, as with a sieve, among all nations ; yet preserved, and always so to be, a distinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas those mighty monarchies, which oppressed the Jews, and commanded the world in their turns, and had the greatest human prospect of perpetuity, were to be extinguished, as they have been, even their names being blotted out from under heaven. Likewise that, as remarkable, of our blessed SAVIOUR concerning the preservation and progress of the Christian church, when in her swaddling cloths, consisting only of a few poor fishermen. Not by the sword, as that of *Mahamet*, but under all the persecution of men and hell ; which yet should not prevail against her.

But, though I offer these, as not to be slighted by Deists, to which they can show nothing equal in all prophane history, and in which it is impossible any cheat can lie ; yet I put them not upon the same foot, as the prophecies, before mentioned, of the marks and coming of the Messiah, which have been since the world began ; and that general expectation of the whole earth, at the time of his coming, insisted upon in the method with the Jews, is greatly to be noticed. But I say, the foregoing prophecies of our SAVIOUR are so strong a proof, that even miracles would not be sufficient to break their authority. I mean, if it were possible, that a true miracle could be wrought in contradiction to them ; for that would be for

God to contradict himself. But no sign or wonder, that could possibly be solved, should shake this evidence.

It is this, that keeps the Jews in their obstinacy ; though they cannot deny the matters of fact, done by our blessed SAVIOUR, to be truly miracles, if so done, as said. Nor can they deny that they were so done, because they have all the four marks before mentioned. Yet they cannot yield. Why ? Because they think that the Gospel is in contradiction to the law ; which, if it were, the consequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To solve this is the business of the method with the Jews. But the contradiction, which they suppose, is in their comments upon the law ; especially they expect a literal fulfilling of those promises of the restoration of Jerusalem, and outward glories of the church, of which there is so frequent mention in the books of Moses, the Psalms and all the Prophets. Many Christians also expect the same, and take those texts as literally, as the Jews do. We believe and pray for the conversion of the Jews. For this end they have been so miraculously preserved, according to the prophecies of it so long before ; and, when that time shall come, as they are the most honorable and ancient of all the nations on the earth, so will their church return to be the mother Christian church, as she was at first ; and Rome surrender to Jerusalem. Then all nations will flow thither ; even Ezekiel's temple may

be literally built there, in the metropolis of the whole earth ; which Jerusalem must be, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall meet the conversion of the Jews. For no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jerusalem for supremacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, " whose are the fathers, and from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Then will be fulfilled that outward grandeur and restoration of the Jews and of Jerusalem, which they expect, pursuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Messiah. They are sure it will not be at the beginning ; for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Messiah (as the Christian church has done) before his final conquest, and before they come to reign with him. So that this is no obstruction to their embracing christianity. They see the same thing fulfilled in us, which they expect themselves ; and we expect the same things, they do.

I tell this to Deists, lest they may think that the Jews have some stronger arguments, than they know of, that they are not persuaded by the miracles of our blessed SAVIOUR, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Messiah.

As I said before, I would not plead even miracles against these ; and, if this is sufficient to persuade a Jew, it is much more so to a Deist, who labors not under these objections.

Beside, I would not seem to clash with that (in a sound sense) reasonable caution, used by Christian writers, not to put the issue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in contradiction to the revelations, already given in the holy scriptures. And they do it upon this consideration, that, though it is impossible to suppose that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed ; yet men may be imposed upon by false and seeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as there are many examples, especially in the church of Rome) and so may be shaken in the faith, if they keep not to the Holy Scriptures, as their rule.

We are told " of him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders ;" and of the devil, and false prophets working miracles. But the word, in all these places, is only *σημεία*, *Signs*, as it is rendered, Matt. xxv. 24, which, though sometimes it may be used to signify real miracles, yet not always, not in these places. For, though every miracle be a sign and a wonder ; yet every sign or wonder is not a miracle.

X. Here it may be proper to consider a common topic of the Deists, who, when they are not able to stand out against the evidence of fact, that such and such miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny such things to be miracles ; at least we cannot be sure, whether any wonderful thing, that is shown to us, be a true or false miracle.

The great argument they go upon is this, that a miracle being that, which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know, what exceeds it, unless we knew the utmost extent of the power of nature ; and no man pretends to know that ; therefore no man can certainly know, whether any event be miraculous ; and consequently he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and false miracles.

To which I answer, that men may be so cheated, and there are many examples of it. But that, though we may not always know, when we are cheated, yet we can certainly tell, in many cases, when we are not cheated.

For, though we do not know the utmost extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing ; yet it does not follow, that we know not the nature of any thing in some measure ; and that certainly too. For example ; though I do not know the utmost extent of the power of fire ; yet I certainly know that it is the nature of fire to burn ; and that, when proper fuel is administered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not to consume it. Therefore, if I see three men taken off the street, in their common wearing apparel, and without any preparation cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and that the flame was so fierce, that it burnt up those men, who threw them in, and yet that these, who were thrown in, walked up and down in the bottom of the furnace ; and I should see a fourth person with them of glorious appearance, like the Son of God ; and

that these men came up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or so much as the smell of fire upon themselves or their clothes ; I could not be deceived in thinking that there was a stop put to the nature of fire, as to these men ; and that it had its effect upon the men, whom it burned, at the same time.

Again ; though I cannot tell, how wonderful and sudden an increase of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many causes, as a warm climate, the fertility of the soil, &c. yet this I can certainly know, that there is not natural force in the breath of two or three words spoken, sufficient to multiply one small loaf of bread so fast in the breaking of it, as truly and really, not only in appearance and show, to fill several thousand hungry persons ; and that the fragments should be much more, than the bread was at first. So neither in a word spoken, to raise the dead, cure diseases, &c.

Therefore, though we know not the utmost extent of the power of nature ; yet we certainly know, what is contrary to the nature of several such things, as we do know ; and therefore, though we may be cheated, and imposed upon in many seeming miracles and wonders ; yet there are some things, wherein we may be certain.

But farther, the Deists acknowledge a God of almighty power, who made all things. Yet they would put it out of his power, to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For, if

we cannot be certain of any miracle, how should we know, when God sent any thing extraordinary to us? Nay, how should we know the ordinary power of nature, if we know not what exceeded it? If we know not, what is natural; how do we know there is such a thing, as nature? That all is not supernatural, all miracles, and so disputable, till we come to downright scepticism, and doubt the certainty of our outward senses, whether we see, hear, or feel; or all be not a miraculous illusion.

Which because I know Deists are not inclined to do, therefore I will pursue my argument upon the conviction of our outward senses, desiring only this, that they would allow the senses of other men to be as certain, as their own; which they cannot refuse, since without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. Therefore from what has been said the cause is summed up shortly in this; though we cannot see, what was done before our time; yet by the marks, which I have laid down concerning the certainty of *matters of fact*, done before our time, we may be as much assured of the truth of them, as if we saw them with our eyes; because, whatever *matter of fact* has all the four marks before mentioned, could never have been received, but upon the conviction of the outward senses of all those, who did receive it, as before is demonstrated. Therefore this topic, which I have chosen, does stand upon the conviction even of

men's outward senses ; and, since you have confined me to one topic, I have not insisted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. Now it lies upon the Deists, if they would appear, as men of reason, to show some matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evidence of its truth, than the matters of fact of MOSES and of CHRIST ; otherwise they cannot, with any show of reason, reject one, and yet admit the other.

But I have given them greater latitude, than this ; for I have shown such marks of the truth of the matters of fact of MOSES and of CHRIST, as no other matters of fact of those times, however true, have ; and I put it upon them to show any forgery, that has all these marks. This is a short issue. Keep them close to this. This determines the cause all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whose life was translated into English by the execrable Charles Blount,* and compared

* The hand of that scorner, who durst write such outrageous blasphemy against his maker, the divine vengeance made his own executioner. Which I would not have mentioned (because the like judgment has befallen others) but that the theistical club have set this up, as a principle, and printed a vindication of this same Blount for murdering himself, by way of justification of self murder ; which some of them have since as well, as formerly, horridly practised upon themselves. Therefore this is no common judgment, to which they are delivered, but a visible mark set upon them, to show how far God has forsaken them ; and, as a caution to all Christians, to beware of them, and not to come near the tents of these wicked men, lest they perish in their destruction, both of soul and body.

with all the wit and malice, he was master of, to the life and miracles of our blessed SAVIOUR.

Let them take aid from all the legends in the church of Rome, those pious cheats, the sorest disgrace of Christianity ; which have bid fairer, than any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of CHRIST and his apostles, and the whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot ; at least they are so understood by the generality of their devotees, though disowned and laughed at by the learned, and by men of sense among them.

Let them select the most probable of all the fables of the heathen deities, and see, if they can find in any of these the four marks before mentioned. Otherwise let them submit to the irrefragable certainty of the Christian religion.

XIII. But if, notwithstanding all that is said, Deists will still contend, that all this is but priestcraft, the invention of priests for their own profit, &c. then they will give us an idea of priests, far different from what they intend ; for then we must look upon these priests, not only as the cunningest and wisest of mankind, but we shall be tempted to adore them, as Deities, who have such power, as to impose at their pleasure upon the senses of mankind, to make them believe that they had practised such public institutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of these things, nor ever so much, as heard of them before ; and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had

done such things, as they never did, to make them farther believe, upon the same foundation, whatever they pleased to impose upon them as to former ages ; I say, such a power, as this, must exceed all that is human ; and consequently make us rank these priests far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all, that has ever been related of the infernal powers ; for, though their legerdemain has extended to deceive some unwary beholders, and their power of working some seeming miracles has been great ; yet it never reached, nor ever was supposed to reach so far, as to deceive the senses of all mankind in matters of so public and notorious a nature, as those of which we now speak ; to make them believe that they had enacted laws for such public observances, continually practised them, taught them to their children, and had been instructed in them themselves from their childhood ; if they had never enacted, practised, taught, or been taught such things.

3. As this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, so is it more than ever God Almighty has done since the foundation of the world. None of the miracles, he has shown, nor belief, which he has required to any thing, he has revealed, ever contradicted the outward senses of any one man, much less of all mankind. For miracles, being appeals to our outward senses, if they overthrow the certainty of our outward senses, must destroy with it their

own certainty as to us ; since we have no other way to judge of a miracle, exhibited to our senses, than upon the supposition of the certainty of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle, that is shown to our senses.

4 This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation, and shows the weakness of the defence, which the church of Rome offers for it (from which the Socinians have licked it up, and of late gloried much in it among us) that the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation contain as great seeming absurdities, as that of transubstantiation ; for I would ask, which of our senses it is, which the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation contradict ? Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling, taste, or smell ? Whereas transubstantiation contradicts all these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short, and out of purpose. But to return. If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing, but the invention of priests, and carried on by their craft ; it makes their power and wisdom greater, than that of men, angels, or devils ; and more, than God himself ever yet showed or expressed, to deceive and impose upon the senses of mankind, in so public and notorious *matters of fact*.

XIV. This miracle, which the Deists must run into, to avoid those recorded of MOSES and CHRIST, is much greater and more astonishing, than all the Scriptures tell of them.

So that these men, who laugh at all mira-
E

cles, are now obliged to account for the greatest of all, how the senses of mankind could be imposed upon in such public *matters of fact*.

How then can they make priests the most contemptible of all mankind ; since they make them the sole authors of this the greatest of miracles ?

XV. Since Deists (these men of sense and reason) have so mean an idea of priests of all religion ; why do they not recover the world out of the possession and government of such blockheads ? Why do they suffer kings and states to be led by them ; to establish their deceptions by laws, and inflict penalties upon the opposers of them ? Let Deists try their hands ; they have been trying, and are now busy about it ; and free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. Though they have some inroads among the Hottentots, and some other the most brutal part of mankind ; yet are they still exploded, and priests have and do prevail against them, among not only the greatest, but best part of the world, and the most glorious for arts, learning, and war.

XVI. For, as the devil apes God in his institutions of religion, his feasts, sacrifices, &c ; so likewise in his priests, without whom no religion, whether true or false, can stand. False religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed close upon the heels.

The revelation, made to Moses, is older, than any history extant in the heathen world.

The heathens, in imitation of him, pretended likewise to their revelations ; but I have given those marks, which distinguish them from the true ; none of them have the four marks, before mentioned.

Now Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat ; and priests of all religions to be the same contrivers and jugglers ; and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the opposition of all.

If the contest be only betwixt Deists and priests, which of them are men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it ; and let Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who by their own confession carry all the world before them.

XVII. If Deists say that this is, because all the world are blockheads as well, as those priests, who govern them ; that all are blockheads, except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense ; this (beside the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic in behalf of what they call natural religion, against revealed, viz. appealing to the common reason of mankind. This they set up against revelation ; think this sufficient for all the uses of men here or hereafter, (if there be any after state) and therefore that revelation is of no use. This common reason they advance as infallible, at least as the surest guide ; yet now cry out upon it, when it turns against them ; when this common reason runs after revelation (as it

always has done) then common reason is a beast ; and we must look for reason, not from the common sentiments of mankind, but only among the beaux, the Deists.

XVIII. Therefore, if Deists would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield and submit to be subdued and hewed down before priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise ; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, that religion is no invention of priests, but of divine original ; that priests were instituted by the same Author of religion ; and that their order is a perpetual and living *monument* of the *matters of fact* of their religion, instituted from the time, when such facts were said to be done ; as the Levites from MOSES, the Apostles and succeeding Clergy from CHRIST, to this day ; that no heathen priests can say the same. They were not appointed by the gods, whom they served, but by others in after ages ; they cannot stand the test of the four rules before mentioned, which Christian priests can do, and they only. Now the Christian priesthood, as instituted by CHRIST himself, and continued by succession to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a testimony to the truth of the matters of fact of CHRIST, as the sacraments, or any other public institutions ; beside that, if the priesthood were taken away, the sacraments and other public institutions, which are administered by their hands, must fall with them ; therefore the devil has been most busy, and

bent his greatest force in all ages against the priesthood, knowing that, if that go down, all goes with it.

XIX. With the Deists, in this cause, are joined the Quakers and others, who throw off the succession of our priesthood together with the sacraments and public festivals. But, if these were dropt, the Christian religion would lose one most undeniable proof of the truth of the *matter of fact* of our SAVIOUR, upon which the truth of his doctrine depends.

Let us consider and honor the priesthood, sacraments, and other public institutions of CHRIST, not only as means of grace and helps to devotion, but as the great evidences of the Christian religion. Such evidences, as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have. Such, as do plainly distinguish it from all foolish legends and impostures whatsoever.

XX. Last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men, who think so unmeasurably of themselves, as the Deists; you may represent to them, what a condition they are in, who spend that life and sense, which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of blessings, his revelations of CHRIST, and by CHRIST, to redeem those from eternal misery, who shall believe in him, and obey his laws; and that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit them; and that there is no denying of them, unless we will be so absurd, as to deny, not only the rea-

son, but the certainty of the outward senses, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general ; that this case is so very plain, that nothing, but want of thought, can hinder any from discovering it ; that they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can show some forgery, which has all the four marks before set down. But, if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves ; or else sit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the priests, of being, not only the most pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the most inconsiderate and inconsiderable of mankind.

Therefore let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass ; and no more time bestowed upon it, than it is worth. But let them rather reflect, how far they have been all this time from Christianity ; whose rudiments they are yet to learn. How far from the way of salvation. How far the race of their lives is run, before they have set one step in the road to heaven. Therefore, how much diligence they ought to use, to redeem the time, they have lost, lest they lose themselves for ever ; and be convinced by dreadful experience, when too late, that the Gospel is a truth, and of the last consequence.

APPENDIX.

DEIST. It is strange, if the case be thus plain, as you have made it, that the whole world is not immediately convinced.

CHRISTIAN. If the seed be ever so good, yet, if it be sown upon stones or among thorns, it will bring forth nothing. There are hearts of stone, and others so filled with the love of riches, with the cares and pleasures of this life, that they will not see ; they have not a mind to know any thing, which would disturb them in their enjoyments, or lessen their opinion of them. Therefore it is no easy matter to persuade men to place their happiness in future expectations, which is the import of the Gospel. In pressing this, and bidding the worldlyminded abandon their beloved vices, and in telling the fatal consequences of them, we must expect to meet, not only their scorn and contempt, but their utmost rage and impatience, to get rid of us, as so many enemies of their lusts and pleasures. This is the cross, which our Saviour prepared all his disciples to bear, who were to fight against flesh and blood, and all the allurements of the world ; and it is a greater miracle, that they have had so many followers in this, than that they have gained to themselves so many enemies. The world is a strong man ; and, till a stronger than he come, he will keep possession ; and this is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our faith. But we are told also, that this faith is the

gift of God ; for all the evidence in the world will not reach the heart, unless it be prepared, like the good ground, to receive the doctrine, that is taught. Till then prejudice will create obstinacy, which will harden the heart like a rock. Under this head also you must consider many, who have not yet heard of the Gospel ; and of those, who have, the far greater number have not capacity or opportunity to examine the evidences of Christianity ; but take things upon trust, just as they are taught. How many others are careless, and will not be at the pains, though they want not capacity, to enquire into the truth ? These classes include the greatest part of mankind ; the ignorant, the careless, the vicious, the obstinate, the ambitious, and the covetous ; whose minds the god of this world hath blinded.

But yet in this midst of this darkness God hath not left himself without witness, which will be apparent to every diligent and sober enquirer who is willing and prepared to receive the truth.

Good Sir, let me ask, would you not think me very brutal, if I should deny that ever there was such a man, as Alexander, or Cæsar, or that they did such things ? If I should deny all history, or that Homer or Virgil, Demosthenes or Cicero, ever wrote such books ? Would you not think me perfectly obstinate, seized with a spirit of contradiction, and not fit for human conversation ? Yet these things are of no consequence to me, whether they are true or false.

Will you then think yourself a reasonable man, if in matters of the greatest importance, even

your eternal state, you will not believe those facts, which have a thousand times more certain evidence? Were there any prophecies of Cæsar or Pompey? Were there any types of them, or public institutions appointed by law, to prefigure the great things, that they should do? Any persons, who went before them, to bear a resemblance of these things, and bid us expect the great event? Was there a general expectation in the world of their coming, before they came?

Were the Greek and Roman histories written by the persons, who did the facts, or by eye-witnesses?

Must we believe these, on pain of not being thought reasonable men? And are we then unreasonable and credulous, if we believe the facts of the Holy Bible?

Are there such prophecies extant in any profane history so long before the facts recorded, as there are in the Holy Scriptures of the coming of the Messiah? Were there any types or forerunners of the heathen gods, or of Mahomet? Is there the like evidence of the truth and sincerity of the Greek and Roman historians, as of the penmen of the Holy Scriptures? Would these historians have given their lives for the truth of all they wrote?

DE. But Christ has foretold, that false Christs shall arise, who shall show great wonders, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Which of these shall we believe?

CHR. The first no doubt. For God cannot contradict himself, nor will show signs and won-

ders in opposition to that law, which he has established by so many signs and wonders.

But we have a more sure word of prophecy. Let then any false Christ, who shall pretend to come hereafter, show such a book, as our Lord's which has been so long in the world testifies of him, foretelling the time, and all other circumstances of his coming, with his suffering and death, and all these prophecies exactly fulfilled in him. Till he can do this, he cannot have evidence, which our Christ has, and he must be a false Christ to me.

But it may be a trial too strong for careless ones, who will not be at the pains to enquire into the grounds of their religion, but rest upon trust, and mind not to frame their lives according to it, but are immersed in the world and the pleasures of it. And it will be a judgment upon these, that they, who shut their eyes against the clear evidences of the gospel, be enabled to believe a lie; because they "have been sure in unrighteousness. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

So that I must repeat it, that there is a preparation of the heart (as of the ground) to receive the truth. Where the doctrine does not please, no evidence, how clear soever, will be received. God cannot enter, before man is dispossessed. We cannot serve these two masters. He, who has a clear sight of heaven, will not value the dull pleasures of this life; and it is impossible that he, who is drowned in the love of the world, can relish spiritual things. The love of the world is enmity against God. The first sin is a temptation of sense; and the reparation

open our eyes to the enjoyment of God. Vice clouds this eye, and makes it blind to the only true and eternal pleasure.

This, sir, is the *remora*, that keeps men from Christianity. It is not want of evidence, but it is want of consideration. I would not say this to you, before I had gone through the topics of reason with you, that you might not call it cant. But this is the truth. As David says, "To him, that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." And our Saviour says, "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

This was the reason, why St. John the Baptist was sent, as a forerunner, to prepare the way for Christ, by preaching repentance, to fit men for receiving the Gospel; and they, who repented of their sins upon his preaching, did gladly embrace the doctrine of Christ. But they, who would not forsake their sins, remained obdurate, though otherwise men of sense and learning. As our Saviour told the Priests and Elders, "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

When Christ sought to prepare them for his doctrine, by telling them that they could not serve God and mammon, it is said, "That, when the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard these things, they derided him." But he instructed them in the next verse, that "what is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the

“sight of God ;” enforcing this by the example of the rich man and Lazarus ; and on another occasion asserted, “ That it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ; and that, whosoever he be, that forsaketh not all, that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Now take this in the largest sense, that he, who is not willing to forsake all, as he hated them, as Christ said, “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother,” and “ take not his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.” How few disciples would he have had in this age ! Would all his miracles persuade some to this ? The world too hard for Heaven with most men !

Here is the cause of infidelity. The love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, darken the heart, and like shutters, keep out the light of Heaven ; till they are removed, the light cannot enter. The spirit of purity and holiness will not descend into a heart full of uncleanness. If we would invite this guest, we must sweep the house and make it clean. But this too is of God ; for he only can make a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. But he has promised to give this wisdom to those who ask it, and lead a godly life. Therefore ask, and ye shall have ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. But do so ardently and incessantly, as he, who striveth for his soul. For God is gracious and merciful, longsuffering, and of great goodness ; and those who come to him in sincerity, he will in no wise cast out. *Finis.*

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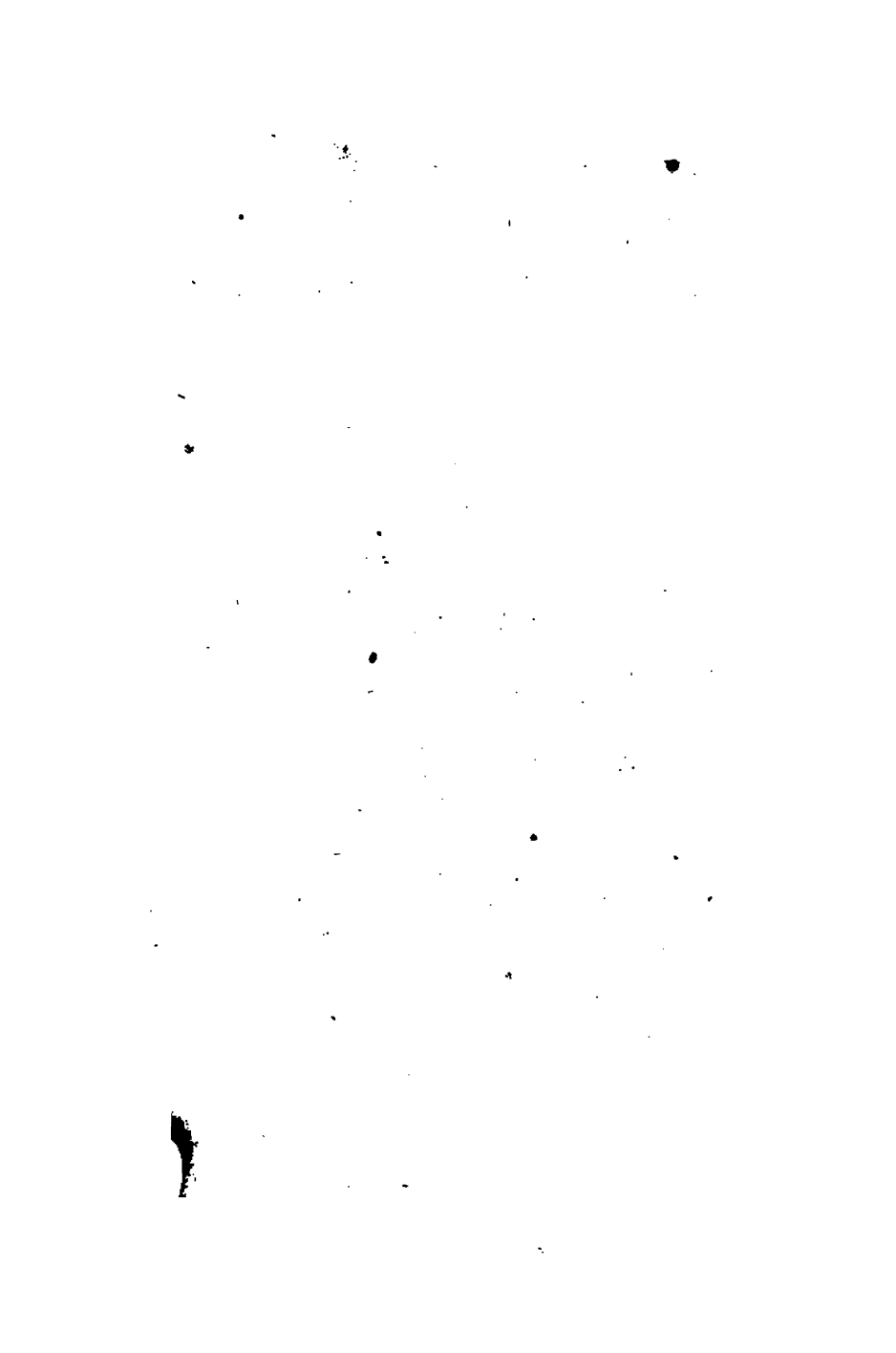
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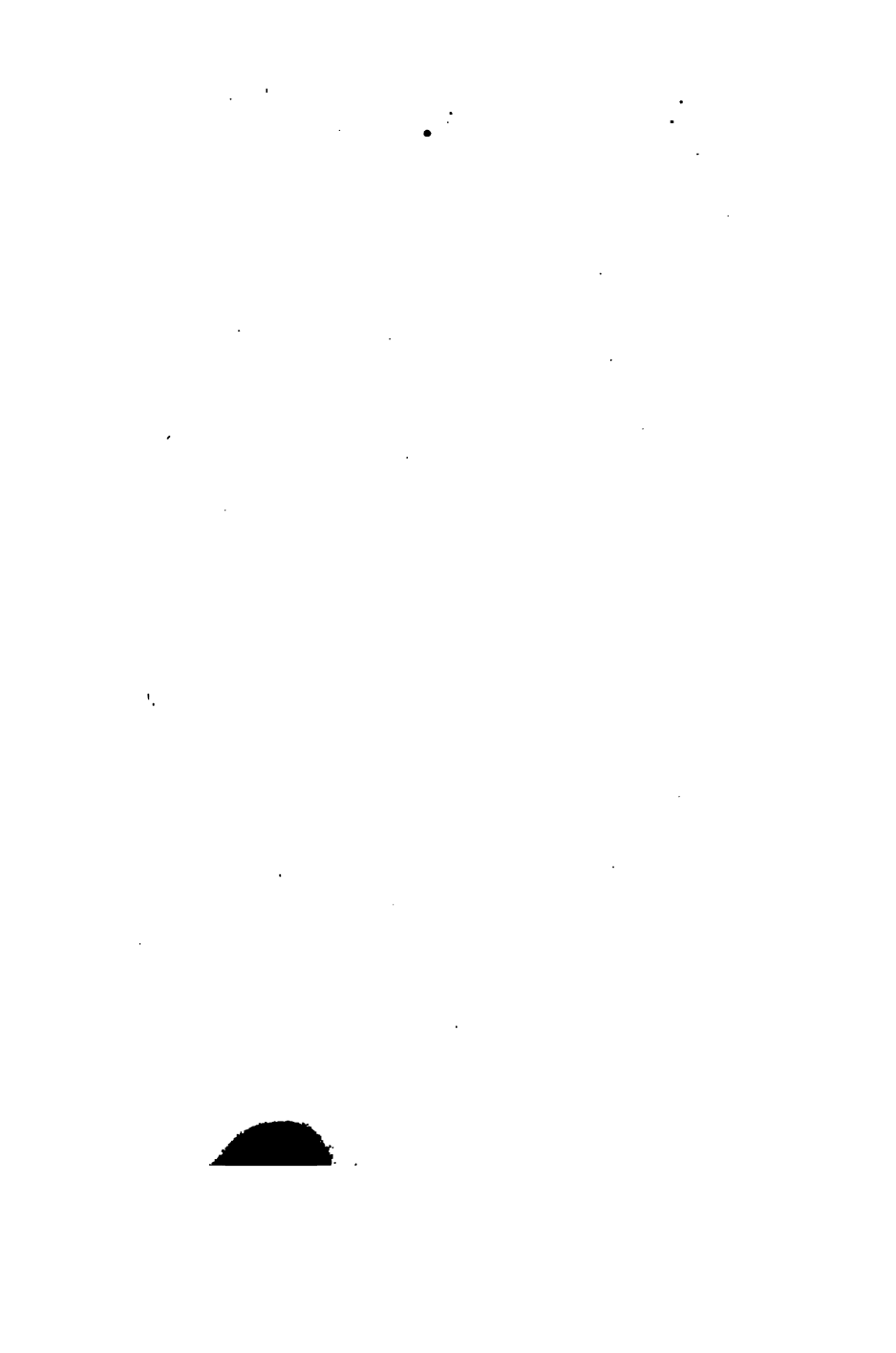
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